

I have had the opportunity to work with some outstanding social workers or to be involved professionally with them. I have been involved with Dr. Roger Witherspoon, who is a great social worker, Mr. Levander Lilly, Ruby Bullock, Betty Williams, Mark Handelman, Ed Pitt, Dr. Joe Jackson, Sam Hodes, and I can go on and on because of my many years of being involved in the field of social work.

This year's theme for National Professional Social Workers Month is "Hope and Health; Help Starts Here." This theme reflects the important work being done by social workers in the health care field.

Social workers involved in health care often work within a multidisciplinary team which includes doctors, nurses and other medical professionals. This is an approach to ensure quality care for patients and their families.

I am grateful for the leadership and expertise that the members of the National Association of Social Workers provide to the people of America and, of course, around the world. Social workers in all disciplines use their collective power every day to strengthen our Nation's families and communities, help individuals overcome adversity, and advance sound social policies. The commitment and dedication of social workers to create a more positive environment for all of our people is to be commended.

Last year, the National Association of Social Workers released the results of a national study which warns of an impending shortage of social workers that threatens future services for all Americans, especially the most vulnerable among us, our children and our senior citizens.

Throughout history, social workers have addressed the needs of society and brought our Nation's social problems to the public's attention. As one of the 10 proud social workers of the House of Representatives, today I know firsthand how social workers across this country advocate for the humane, fair and beneficial policies for all of our citizens.

So I salute all social workers during this National Professional Social Work Month; and I say to my colleagues around the board, social workers make a great contribution to the improvement of the quality of life for so many people in this country.

DENOUNCING THE GOVERNMENT OF BELARUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, March 25, approximately 7,000 citizens of Belarus gathered together in commemoration of the 89th anniversary of the short-lived Belarusian National Republic, which was formed on March 25, 1918, when Belarusians proclaimed their independence from the

Russian empire. Unfortunately, only 10 months later, the Red Army entered Minsk, quashed this democracy and set up the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic.

On Sunday, the brave men and women of Belarus gathered together to commemorate their ancestors' drive for democracy and independence almost 90 years ago and express their own desire to live in free and democratic Belarus. This group had planned to assemble in October Square in central Minsk to start their peaceful march towards the National Academy of Sciences. However, participants arrived at this public square to find it blocked by riot police, and trucks and busses were forced to split into several groups.

One group decided to march to the Sport Palace and reassemble there. When they got to that destination, they were met by a large number of policemen warning that if they did not leave within the next 5 minutes, special measures would be taken against them. Several minutes later, the first clash between the police and protesters took place, with several people beaten and arrested. Former presidential candidate Aleksander Milinkevich and his wife were among those hit and knocked to the ground.

Finally, the group managed to break through and march to the National Academy of Sciences, where they were able to meet up with the rest of the group; and a rally was held. Participants included young people and families with children. They shouted slogans, sang songs and waived red and white Belarusian flags and banners which read "Freedom to Kozulin and freedom to political prisoners."

While speaking to the crowd, former presidential candidate Aleksander Milinkevich declared that "Democratic Belarus will prevail, as truth and God are on its side. Under the weight of its lies, this regime will fall, but we should give it a push with our strength, our loyalty and our love for the homeland. We should do this in a peaceful manner, as Belarusians don't like violence. We are peaceful people and have not shed anyone's blood. It is our blood that has been shed and our people are in prison."

Yet in spite of the peaceful nature of a crowd and Mr. Milinkevich's public assurances that the pro-democratic forces carried a message of peace, the police continued to try to break up the rally. Police set up loudspeakers which continually interrupted the rally speakers, warning the group that their actions were illegal, that they had not received permission to hold a rally at the National Academy of Sciences, and if they refused to leave, physical force would be used against them. Forty people were arrested on March 25th alone. Many people were also beaten with police batons.

Leaders of the pro-democratic forces in Belarus, Anatoly Lebedko, Alexander Milinkevich, Victor Karnyenko

and Valentina Polevikova, were among those hit by security forces' batons, with Ms. Polevikova suffering a head injury.

What is additionally disconcerting is that 60 additional activists were arrested on March 23rd and 24th in the lead-up to the rally in a shocking incident. Prominent pro-democratic activist and mother of two, Krystsina Shatsikava, was abducted by unknown men and forced into a car at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, March 23rd. She was later brought to a mental hospital in Mogilov, where she said that she had been tied to a bed and given an unknown injection at the hospital. She was finally released today. The young woman was a prominent activist following the fraudulent presidential elections in March, 2006, and had repeatedly declared her intention to participate in the March 25th rally.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I find it appalling that 7,000 peaceful protestors gathered together to commemorate an anniversary of national independence and freedom, only to have their voices crushed once again by the current regime of Aleksander Lukashenko.

I denounce the government of Belarus for its actions against these peaceful protestors and demand that they release all the activists who were jailed for their participation during the leading up to the March 25th rally.

I also, along with our European colleagues, once again urge the government of Belarus to allow its citizens to exercise their right to assemble peacefully and express their views freely.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Hampshire (Ms. SHEA-PORTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. SHEA-PORTER addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)